

USING RUDOLF LABAN'S EFFORT SYSTEM AS AN INROAD TO CHOREOGRAPHY

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Department of Modern Dance

The University of Utah

May 2015

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The University of Utah Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

This thesis interweaves Rudolf Laban's Effort theories, observation and analysis devices stemming out of the Integrated Movement Studies program, personal and physical influences from ballroom dance, modern dance, and movement analysis, and the fully embodied experience of my first pregnancy as primary resources toward the development of a dance work. I explore how Rudolf Laban's Effort theories aid in the understanding of emotions woven within our dreams. I discuss a creative method for making an original work of choreography, sourcing the content listed above. In this particular arts-based research, the Effort system is capable of benefiting those who seek a language to describe nuances in movement that might be challenging to express. Application of this research also has potential to model specific choreographic tools available in the creative process of choreographing, especially for those wishing to use the Effort system in choreography. Further, this project reveals my own growth as a movement artist, including an excavation of past influences and possible future impact.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, John, for his unwavering love throughout my graduate school journey. Thank you for pushing me to become a better person, always believing in me and supporting my crazy dreams.

I also dedicate this thesis to my parents, Blair and Cheryll Treu. Thank you Mom for being my number one fan, and always encouraging me with words of love and praise on those long drives to and from school. Thank you Dad for inspiring me with your creative genius. Thank you for thoroughly enjoying my choreography and laughing along with me.

Thank you Sharee, Pam, and Meghan for pushing me to think outside the box and most importantly your support and dedication to see me through to the end

CHAPTER 1

INFLUENCES

Section 1: Ballroom Dance Experience

At the age of nine, I began my ballroom dance journey. It started as a recreational activity where I learned how to dance and perform with a small group of children in an afterschool elementary program. Shortly thereafter, I participated in my first competition and fell in love with this dance form right away.

The development of ballroom began at the end of the 16th century, and historical content suggests that only upper class people were allowed to participate in this social activity. This distinction changed over time, allowing for all walks of life to join in the dance. Today, we see people participating in various ballroom environments such as social dances, exhibition performances, and formal competitions. Many people have been exposed to ballroom through popular television shows such as *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Dancing with the Stars*.

Much like the form of ballet, ballroom dance has codified steps, precise footwork, patterns, and structured body holds. To master ballroom, one must train musically and rhythmically, and learn proper partner body contact concepts, and dance etiquette. Men and women also learn their conventional dance roles—gender roles that were created and

kept as ballroom developed over the years. Currently, the majority of dance schools and dance teachers continue to teach these traditional roles, and they have become part of competition rules. Dance manuals and certification programs exist for teachers so that they may assist students in learning the proper forms of dance. I have had the opportunity to participate in social and competitive ballroom dance aspects, mastering each codified dance at different stages in my life as both performer, competitor and teacher.

Professor George Uba (2007), an English professor and scholar of Asian American studies who specializes in social dance forms, states that,

Social Dance... in its widest application embraces a diversity of expressions and forms, ranging from square dancing to Charleston and from Lindy Hop to Country Two-Step. However, social dancing also can refer to more casual, less regulated versions of such recognizable “ball- room” dances as waltz, tango, foxtrot, rumba, cha cha, and samba (p. 143).

Therefore, students of social dance seek basic knowledge in various social dance styles with the ability to change partners often. This allows them to comfortably participate in an atmosphere with others that also share their love for dancing. A teacher’s main goal should be to teach the social dancer how to navigate a dance using lead/follow skills and utilizing the correct steps to create patterns and routines. Depending on the type of person, social ballroom dance can be either exciting or produce great anxiety. The man in a dance coupling makes all of the choices on the dance floor. He picks the order of the steps and leads the woman around the floor while striving to avoid the moving obstacles of other dancing couples. It is the woman’s job to follow his choices, be knowledgeable in the steps he chooses, and know how to interpret his lead with learned following skills. When both parties accomplish their jobs, the result is magical. From my personal experience as a woman, I know that it is incredibly thrilling to wait for the man’s lead. At

times, it felt like a game where I did my best to show my following skills while simultaneously anticipating what might come next. I assumed this traditional role while learning all styles of ballroom. My ballroom partnering experience was based on the codified rules of the National Dance Council of America (NDCA) during my amateur and professional competitive years—that a man and woman must always dance together with the understanding of the previous roles explained before. I understand there is literature on feminist and queer dancing in ballroom, and that many polarities exist in the interpretation of gendered dancer roles, but for the purposes of this thesis, I only mention the roles that I personally learned and understood.

The contemporary practice of competitive ballroom dancing is very different in respect to social dancing. Over the years, competition organizers have developed prescribed rules and regulations for participants, driving many teachers to focus on teaching competitors routines rather than allowing them to explore and develop their own patterns. It is not easy to plainly say that one ballroom dancer has more opportunity than the other to explore movement, or work collaboratively with their teachers. However, from personal experience the social dance atmosphere always allowed me to explore and collaborate with my partner, while my competitive training never truly allowed for either. My competitive teachers were highly respected and I never asked to explore or collaborate on the movement that was given, because I trusted that what I was taught would help me progress as a competitor. I was under the impression for years that competitors listen and subject themselves to their teachers, never questioning and never asking to collaborate on the choreography. For many competitors this is culturally understood and practiced. Interestingly, I have witnessed young dancers who solely train

for competitions struggle in the social dancing atmospheres, because they have been given routines rather than taught how to create their own patterns and maneuver in a social dance atmosphere.

In the United States, the NDCA is the “Official Governing Council of Dance and DanceSport... for sanctioned competitions and championships... (and) is the leading authority of dance for Professionals, Amateurs and Pro/Am competitors” (NDCA.org, home page). The World DanceSport Federation (WDSF) is an organization recognized worldwide that sanctions all world events. Competitors are given a rulebook that informs them of what is expected at their level of competition—including gender roles, what steps are allowed, and costume rules. There are several categories of ballroom styles offered to various skill levels of dancers. The main categories offered at sanctioned competitions include International Latin, International Standard (also known as International Modern), American Smooth, American Rhythm, and Exhibition/Theater Arts. Uba (2007) points out that other forms of ballroom than those previously listed are included in competition, stating that “while international-style dancing is particularly linked with competition, various non-international style social dances also are shaped into high-level showcase and competition forms—salsa and varieties of swing are examples” (p. 143). Students who participate in competition commence in the appropriate age category and level, slowly working their way up by winning and moving on to a more challenging competitive group. Competitors are judged on footwork, body connection, their understanding of musicality, choreography, execution of steps and performance.

While it is important for the competitive ballroom man and woman to understand their lead/follow roles, as mentioned before most couples are given set routines by their

dance coaches. Couples who show promising results tend to stay together for several seasons, allowing them to develop a close relationship and understanding of their partner's movement language. In my experience, the longer I danced with a partner, the easier it was for me to follow his lead and for our style of dancing to mesh. I danced with one of my partners for seven years, and this put us at an advantage because we were so versed as a competitive dance couple. We had successful seasons as youth competitors and remained undefeated.

As a youth, I was not necessarily encouraged to experiment with my competitive routines, nor was I given the opportunity to investigate my performance quality. I waited for my coaches to direct me on everything, even my facial expressions. I cannot speak for all dancers, but this seemed to be the majority of youth and amateur competitors experiences while growing up in a well-known dance capitol, Provo, Utah. It was not until I began dancing in my last year of amateur competition that I was given the opportunity to break free from this constricting structure—one that did not allow for experimentation or mutual exploration. While attending Brigham Young University one of my last amateur coach's invited me to collaborate with him on my theater arts exhibition dance. As a high level professional competitor in 2012, and with my background in contemporary/modern dance, I was just beginning to use collaborating with my partner and coaches in the choreographic process. My professional coaches were always pleasantly surprised when I took the initiative to assist in choreographic endeavors, and they seemed to enjoy the process as well. In a way, I was considered a unique student because I had acquired a different kind of dance knowledge that was not typically used in the ballroom world.

In 2012 I received my Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance (ISTD) Certification in International Ballroom Theory. The main focus of the ISTD curriculum is to teach correct technique and dance theory. When tested to receive my certification, I was asked to demonstrate my knowledge of the steps through physical demonstration and verbal recall of the technique. Since the curriculum only valued technical precision, I was not trained to teach ballroom with a creative approach—such as incorporating improvisation, collaboration, etc. It was emphasized, and understood, that the NDCA and WDSF accepted this technique as the most acceptable technique for their sanctioned competitions. All NDCA and WDSF judges are required to be certified through the ISTD.

Before I received my certification and becoming a professional, I noticed that I never used collaboration in my ballroom pedagogy and choreography with my students. I was using the very same prescribed teaching methods my own youth and amateur teachers had used with me. I felt these methods produced great results in my personal dancing, because I was constantly making finals or winning competitions—what many competitors deem as successful. When beginning my graduate studies with a focus in modern dance I began to question whether there were other means to produce similar outcomes; and if I could find a more simple way to communicate to my students what was needed to properly demonstrate competition technique and performance quality. I also began to wonder if there was a way I could use improvisation, collaboration, or any other creative approach to teach ballroom, especially to those heavily involved in competition. I greatly value my experiences as a ballroom dancer because I came to understand the purpose of this prescribed structure: set steps, precise footwork, codified

patterns, suggested performance quality, partner body contact techniques, implied rules about choreographic structure, competition rules and regulations, effective ways to teach ballroom, etc. It offered me consistency and tended to be less stressful in the teaching and choreographic process. I felt confident in myself as a ballroom choreographer and teacher because such structure was predictable and comforting.

Upon entering graduate school I longed to break free from prearranged structure, and I specifically wanted to use a collaborative process in my thesis project—one that I had so often experienced in modern dance. My biggest fear was losing a sense of established structure by exclusively working collaboratively. I questioned if I should construct an environment that was comprised of both prescribed structure and collaboration, or whether I should begin with structure and switch to an exclusively collaborative process. One of the only concerns I had while moving forward with my thesis project was my ability to move away enough from a codified structure that was so ingrained in my dance training.

Section 2: Integrated Movement Studies Program

I began the majority of my modern dance training in college and it was at that time I was introduced to concepts such as improvisation, and collaboration in creating movement. At that time, this new information had only informed my modern dancing. When I was a senior, about to graduate, these concepts had barely surfaced in my ballroom dancing. I was not sure how to translate improvisation or collaboration into my ballroom dancing—especially because it was not taught in my college ballroom courses. However, there seemed to be one system of study that began to enhance my ballroom

dancing dramatically, the Bartenieff Fundamentals (BF) and Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) systems.

In high school and college I had many modern dance teachers use parts of the BF and LMA systems to teach modern technique, improvisation, and teaching method courses. I learned that through these systems, I could bring to life something new in my body. These language systems, BF and LMA, helped me clarify my intentions as a mover and most importantly, helped me discover a verbal language that described what I was feeling in movement. Both systems also greatly supported my functional and expressive ballroom dancing. I desired to learn these systems in depth and a few years later, I had the opportunity to participate in the 2013-2014 Integrated Movement Studies Program (IMS) under the direction of Peggy Hackney, Janice Meaden, and Cadence Whittier. For the first portion of my coursework, I was immersed in Bartenieff Fundamentals (BF) and the Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) System. I officially became a Certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst on October 6th, 2014.

The IMS program taught me many things including how to reconnect with my own body, observe and analyze movement, communicate and describe movement more effectively using the LMA language, and give hands-on feedback to assist in neuromuscular repatterning. Most importantly, I learned how to apply this information in my field of work. Each part of BF and LMA opened my mind to new and endless possibilities. This was a critical stepping-stone in my journey as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer.

While focusing on the BF work in the program, I began to experience and reclaim my body connections through movement patterns that are fundamental in human

movement. This ultimately helped me become a more efficient mover, and I learned that “functional capacities underline expressive capabilities” (Hackney, 2002, p. 19). My movement intentions became clear and so did my expressive qualities. Movement analyst, community advocate, and educator Ed Groff (2011) explains the LMA system so beautifully:

Laban Movement Analysis is a system of movement description that provides a vocabulary and conceptual framework for the investigation and understanding of the ingredients of movement expression (p. 3).

Having the opportunity to embody the LMA systems sparked many new interests for me as a dance teacher, performer, and choreographer. I became interested in developing my observation and communication skills— especially knowing that movement is an outer reflection of our inner intent. I was beginning to believe that the LMA language could facilitate these desires. One particular part of the LMA system that resonated with me most was a category called Effort. This part of the system “is the layer of movement expression that most directly reveals the emotional content, the qualitative display of inner affects” (Groff, 2011, p. 87). Dance artist and theorist Rudolf Laban (1971), who devised the Laban Movement system, explains in *The Mastery of Movement* that this part of the system is where a person “adopts a definite attitude” (p. 76) that is revealed by looking at four important factors also known as Effort qualities: Weight, Space, Time and Flow. These four factors “describe the manner in which energy is channeled to yield a range of dynamic stresses” (Groff, 2011, p. 87). As I began to learn this part of the system, I was enamored with the idea that Effort could help me observe a mover’s inner attitude and understand the emotional underpinnings of their movements.

Up until this point, most of my dance training was focused on technique, and I

was told what to feel and how to act. I rarely studied my personal intent or the emotions being depicted. In all honesty, I was embarrassed and scared to join in conversations about dance because I felt like I could not understand what I saw on an emotional level. It was like I was colorblind to inner intent. I had no problem talking about the beautiful technique or describing to someone what his or her technique lacked. The study of Effort through the IMS program changed all of this for me and provided me with specific language to call upon when discussing dance movement—a particular language in the LMA system that describes movement in four categories known as Body, Shape, Effort and Space. I became more articulate and nuanced in my observations of dance movement and increasingly confident in coaching others to become more fully expressive through their movement. I came to realize that this new skill I learned would benefit me in every aspect of dance, and I desired to use this knowledge in my thesis project.

Section 3: My Pregnancy

During the summer of 2013, and just before beginning my last year of graduate school, I had very vivid dreams. It was most likely because I was in the beginning stages of my first pregnancy. It is believed that oneiric activity, dreaming while sleeping, becomes more frequent for pregnant women. Medical doctor, psychologist, and sleep researcher Yaron Dagan (2001) states that, “one could deduce that the high frequency of dreams during pregnancy is a para-physiological event linked to changes during pregnancy, without considering it as an expression of a real psycho-emotive disorder” (p. 18). In a study by psychiatric researcher Alfredo Mancuso (2008) and five other researchers, it was concluded that the changes through which a pregnant body goes and

the “unconscious conflicts and basic anxieties linked to pregnancy, make dreams more accessible and more easily recalled” (p. 380). The many dreams I experienced were filled with myriad emotions, and my dreams were often nonlinear. Some were exciting while others frightened me. I even awoke from sleep to find myself crying several times. Overall, these dream experiences were exhilarating, especially because I rarely was aware that I had dreamed.

In the same study completed by Mancuso (2008), he mentions that, “dreams are symbolic manifestations with an emotional meaning linked to lived experiences, wishes and personal needs” (p. 380). One night, I had a dream about dancing the tango in a bar with other women, showing off, and fighting over men. When I awoke, I was able to recall all the details to my husband. I believe I had what renowned author, therapist teacher, and Jungian dream analyst Arnold Mindell (1982) calls the “big dream,” which he further defines as a “life-changing dream” (p. 15). I imagine this type of dream can give us insight about life, inspire us to create, and give us the opportunity to perceive differently. These “big dreams” also have the potential to help us find ourselves. Furthermore, Mindell (1982) states that this type of dream offers “a huge opportunity and opening to life never experienced before” (p. 15). After experiencing my “big dream,” I desired to create a dance work based off of my dreams during pregnancy.

Taylor (1992), an ordained minister and Jungian spiritualist, emphasizes the importance of paying attention to dreams no matter the subject, saying “It is as though every nightmare says to the dreamer upon awakening: ‘Pay attention! This is *worth* remembering, whether you happen to *think* so at this moment or not!’” (p. 5). Taylor (1992) further discusses nightmares mentioning that “what is remembered is worth

remembering because it always contains valuable information. *All* dreams bring us creative energies and insights into the meaning of confusing emotions” (p. 5-6). I agree with Taylor (1992) that we should value our dreams. Mine helped me cope with the many emotions I was experiencing during pregnancy.

I began to wonder if it was possible to convey through movement what I felt in dreams. One way of approaching this thesis would have been to use myself as the subject and perform the work myself. However, my pregnancy automatically put me at a physical uncertainty. I did not know how my body would hold up moving and preparing for a performance. Therefore, I decided to use a group of dancers and their dreams. I was interested in investigating the dancer’s dreams with attention to quality and individuality. I was not interested in literally representing their dreams but rather, crafting movement based on intentions behind the dreams.

Approaching the work this way presented a whole new line of questions: How would I create choreography as inspired by other’s dreams without literally representing their dreams? Would the LMA system support me as I looked at the quality and inner intent of their dreams? Once I had discovered their inner intent, how would I craft and form a piece that honored such personal experience? All of these questions thrust me into finding a process that would transform dreams into movement. My structured ballroom dance experience, dreams during pregnancy, and IMS program experiences greatly impacted the way I approached creating a dance thesis piece.

CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF LABAN MOVEMENT ANALYSIS

Section 1: Rudolf Laban and His Legacy

Rudolf Laban lived from 1879-1958 and, as a child, was introduced to a vast array of knowledge in the arts and sciences. Young Laban was interested in the arts and developed talents in painting, music, theatre and dance (Groff, 1990; Preston-Dunlop, 2008). His exploration and fascination with nature shaped many of his thoughts about life and by “retaining a youthful fascination for fantasy and magic, he gained an adult appreciation for the elemental truths displayed in natural relationships and the capacity for insight inherent in non-rational experience” (Groff, 1990, p. 34). As Laban matured into adulthood, Freud’s philosophies about the psyche and religious Rosicrucian ideas he learned about while attending Ecoles des Beaux Arts School in Europe greatly influenced his belief that the body “holds truths which, through sensitizing practices, can be reached and should be sought” (Preston-Dunlop, 2008, p. 11). Laban’s concerns with the psyche and “practice of locating and sensitizing centers both within and outside the body” (Preston-Dunlop, 2008, p. 11) led him to develop the “notion that it was within his means to define a body of knowledge and create a notation system that was in fact capable of describing human movement in all its vast array of expression” (Groff, 1990, p. 32).

Besides this philosophical inspiration derived from the work of Freud and Rosicrucian practices, Laban's life experiences as an artist and military officer/trainee, in addition to his exposure to the industrial revolution, greatly influenced his research about human movement.

Laban began experimenting with dance plays, presenting his first called *Die Erde* (The Earth) in 1897. Many more followed, but he left his work in 1899 for a brief period when his father prompted him to enter the Officer's Training Academy in Wiener Neustadt, Austria. While in training, he learned advanced riding skills, military etiquette, fencing, social dancing, and was also introduced to complex machinery of all sizes. Laban was asked at some point in his training to arrange a celebratory pageant. Laban decided to use dance as the main spectacle, inviting soldiers from all regional and ethnic backgrounds to participate. He arranged an enormous intercultural group dance that demonstrated each cadet's hometown dances, and was deemed successful. After this performance, Laban said, "for the first time in my life, the thought entered my mind that dance was the art with which I should be involved" (Laban, 1975, p. 56). This experience led him to research and write much later in his life about dancing in large groups and what he defines as movement choirs.

At the turn of the century, only one year after training, he left the military to pursue all forms of art. He felt the need to "protect the spiritual dimension of life against the withering effect of industrialization" (Preston-Dunlop, 2008, p. 7). This "dichotomy of technical progress and spiritual decay," (Groff, 1990, p. 36) deeply influenced his work and he began to advocate the need to admire nature and spirit through celebrating humanity. Laban decided about ten years or so after his military experience that dance

was the absolute form for the body and soul (Preston-Dunlop, 2008), and through his choreography he “fostered a sense of ritual and artistic liveliness in his students, peers and audiences” (Groff, 1990, p. 36) for the remainder of his life.

Laban developed a movement notation system during the 1920s to record dance. Today it is known as the Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) system and was created to describe and formulate the qualitative and quantitative features of human movement expression (Adrian, 2008; Moore & Yamamoto, 2012). Bergin (2000) says that LMA “is one of the most comprehensive methods used to understand the quality of movement” (p.13), and the main purpose is to note the outer expression of internal experience. The system is made up of four parts that are used to analyze movement: Body, Shape, Space and Effort.

During World War II, Laban was invited by the management consultant F.C. Lawrence (1895-1982) to study factory productivity since war shortages had taken away the ability to use film for studying factory line operations (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012). Laban was asked to determine if productivity was proficient by notating and analyzing individual workers’ task-oriented movements (Moore, 2009; Schmitt, 1994). He was able to identify effective labor output by analyzing “the rhythmic features of a task, defined in terms of the flow, weight, time and spatial factors it required” (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 97). Immediately, Laban became interested in exploring “ways to reduce the amount of intensity and exertion required in executing tasks, otherwise referred to as movement efficiency” (Koningsveld, 2011, p. 36). This work opened new doors for Laban, and he decided to pursue analysis studies on clerical and managerial functions. He used the same methods to analyze their movements and described his findings in terms of

Effort: Flow, Weight, Time and Space—Effort being one of the four categories that exist in the LMA system. Beyond his interest in observing task-oriented movement, defined as functional movement in LMA, Laban also began to explore expressive movement using his Effort theories.

Overall, Laban sought a language that would communicate the “essential ingredients of human movement expression” (Groff, 1990, p. 32) and accomplished this by observing the moving body in its cultural, physical, and emotional environments (Adrian, 2008). He concluded that movement is a “two way language process through which the human body could communicate by giving and receiving messages” (Newlove, 1993, p. 11). LMA gives us the opportunity to find a description that words do not always offer when analyzing human behavior and a better insight into a mover’s intentions by observing these four aspects of movement: Body, Shape, Effort and Space. This thesis questions if the category of Effort is capable of assisting in the process of dream recall and analyzing dreams that happen in the subconscious mind—especially since dream movement is not originally made physical in the body. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will look at today’s current Effort category developed by Laban and the observation and analysis process that the IMS program teaches students when specifically looking at Effort.

Section 2: Eukinetics and Effort Factors

During the 1920s, Laban was extremely interested in the study of how movement is performed, and he developed his theories on Eukinetics while working on choreography with his dancers (Hodgson, 2001; Moore, 2009; Moore, 2005; Preston-Dunlop, 2008). As Laban’s research continued, he began to alter his position, slowly

replacing the term Eukinetics with *Effort* due to his explicit studies in workplace efficiency following World War II (Bartenieff, 1970; Moore, 2009).





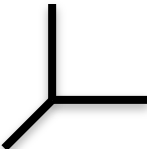






As stated before, the quality of movement produced is influenced by inner experience and “becomes visible through the use of *effort life*, or patterns of effort use over time” (Koningsveld, 2011, p.18; Moore, 2009). Newlove (1993) clarifies that effort appears within shifts in muscular energy and that expressive meaning can change with even the slightest shifts. These changes are also explained by Moore (2009) as “ephemeral shift(s) from mood to mood” which “cannot be observed directly, but can be inferred by what a person does and, more significantly, by how an action is performed” (p. 147). Authors Moore and Yamamoto (1988) endorse that Effort consists of “rich and differentiated dynamic qualities with which movement may be performed,” (p. 196) and is “visibly expressed” through rhythmic body motions (Laban & Lawrence, 1974, p. 2). With the understanding of how Effort is expressed in the body, my thesis asks this question: How might the observation and analysis of embodied Effort in my dancers dreams assist me in the process of transforming their movement expressed in dreams to choreography? More specifically, how can the Effort system help my dancers with dream recall? For my readers to better comprehend how the category of Effort assisted me in dream recall, it is useful at this time to break down the category of Effort.

Laban decided to use simple vocabulary to describe Effort and developed a notation system for those wishing to use shorthand while analyzing movement (Adrian, 2008; Bergin, 2000; Laban, 1988; Laban & Lawrence, 1974; Moore, 2005; Moore, 2009; North, 1975). Groff (1990) explains that the category of Effort “addresses the qualitative range of expression in movement” and is the “least quantifiable” because it “most

directly reveals the emotional content (and) the qualitative display of inner affect” (p. 87). This is the outer manifestation of a mover’s “inner attitude toward the physical properties of weight, space, time and flow” (Groff, 1990, p. 87). In other words, Effort can describe nuance, emotion, and qualitative experiences of the mover. These four physical properties create the inner expressive scaffolding of Effort and “result from an inner attitude (conscious or unconscious) towards the (primary) motion factors of Weight, Space, Time and Flow” (Laban, 1988, p. 11). Groff (1990) clarifies, “Laban recognized that movement as an ongoing process (Flow) always involved a change of assertion of the weight of the bodies’ mass (Weight) in relation to a spatial environment (Space) occurring in a particular duration of time (Time)” (p. 87). Each of the four motion factors consists of opposing dynamic polarities that address “an aspect of movement change” (Moore, 2005, p. 58). Table 1 defines each motion factor and their dynamic polarizing Effort qualities. This particular terminology was taught to the 2013-2014 IMS students, and Jaclyn Levy and Marshall Duke offer definitions from their 2003 article.

On Figure 1, the diagonal mark highlighted in red is the common element in all notation symbols indicating “Effort” (Moore, 2009; North, 1975). When all the symbols are combined, an Effort graph appears and the diagonal hash mark combines all Effort qualities. The blue dotted line on the graph separates the Effort qualities into two distinct groups: indulging and fighting Efforts. Laban determined that Free Flow, Light Weight, Indirect Space, and Sustained Time all share the attribute of “going with,” labeling these qualities as the indulging Efforts; Bound Flow, Strong Weight, Direct Space and Quick Time all share the attribute of “fighting against,” labeling these qualities as the fighting Efforts (Groff, 1990; Laban & Lawrence, 1974).

Table 1. Motion Factors and Effort Qualities

Motion Factors	Effort Qualities
<p><u>Weight</u> Is “the amount of force involved in a moment,” using body weight.</p> 	<p><u>Strong</u> -Forcefulness -Firm touch -Increasing Pressure</p> 
<p><u>Time</u> Is “the degree of urgency or acceleration/deceleration involved in a movement.”</p> 	<p><u>Quick</u> -Urgency -Acceleration</p> 
<p><u>Space</u> Is “the attitude towards a chosen pathway or how that pathway is approached” and how we attend to the environment.</p> 	<p><u>Sustained</u> -Drawing out -Indulging in passing time</p> 
<p><u>Flow</u> Is “the degree to which a movement is controlled versus released” in the body; ongoing baseline in all movement.</p> 	<p><u>Direct</u> -Channeled -Single focus</p> 
	<p><u>Indirect</u> -Encompassing -Multifocused</p> 
	<p><u>Free</u> -Indulging -Liberating -Goingness</p> 
	<p><u>Bound</u> -Restraining -Restricting -Inhibiting</p> 

(IMS 2013-2014; Levy & Duke, 2003; Groff, 1990)

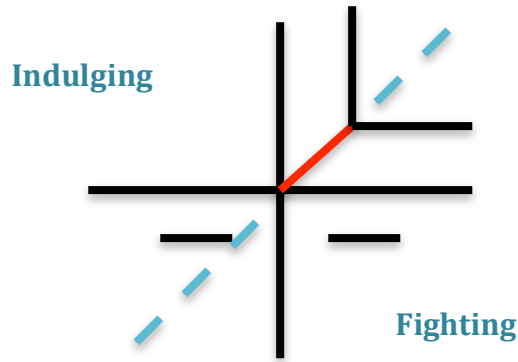


Figure 1: Effort Graph

Single Effort qualities can be combined into configurations of two, three, or four elements. Combining qualities is like mixing a batch of cookies. The more ingredients you add or take away, the more changes in taste and character. Dancers have the capacity to move through several Effort configurations within seconds—demonstrating their ability to add, take away, or completely change the elements. Groff (1990) states that “the motion factors are not mutually exclusive, rather they constitute the ingredients of Effort expression that emerge and subside in rhythms of fluctuation” (p. 89-90). Laban refers to these dynamic changes as Effort phrasing.

Laban defines States as an arrangement of two motion factors, and there are a total of six possible combinations: Stable State, consisting of Weight and Space; Awake State, consisting of Time and Space; Dream State, consisting of Flow and Weight; Mobile State, consisting of Flow and Time; Remote State, consisting of Flow and Space; and Rhythm State, consisting of Weight and Time (Laban, 1988). Each State gives four possible configurations since “each motion factor is a continuum between two polar qualities” (Groff, 1990, p. 90). For example, Awake State consists of the four configurations: Quick and Direct, Quick and Indirect, Sustained and Direct, Sustained

and Indirect. All six States produce twenty-four possible configurations and are known to “serve throughout everyday situations and tend to manifest in movements of a casual nature” (Koningsveld, 2011, p. 28). Thesis research by Koningsveld (2011) found several publications that considered States to be “transitory moments, or incomplete [elemental] actions” (p. 28) that tend to appear between functional and expressive actions called Drives (Laban, 1988; Moore, 2009; Newlove 1993).

Laban defines Drives as an arrangement of three motion factors, and there are a total of four possible combinations: Passion Drive, consisting of Weight, Time and Flow; Action Drive, consisting of Weight, Time and Space; Spell Drive, consisting of Weight, Space and Flow; and Vision Drive, consisting of Space, Time and Flow (Laban, 1988; Maletic, 2005). Within each Drive there are eight possible configurations for a total of thirty-two possible Drive configurations (Groff, 1990). Drives are considered the primary mode of action while States are the “moment-to-moment stepping-stones between Drives” (Adrian, 2008, p. 142). From personal experience, I most often observe dancers using Drives more than States when performing. Further, Drives tend to be my go-to element when beginning the observation process and became my main interest in the thesis choreography because they are the primary mode of action.

Shifts in mood, mentioned earlier in this section, “can also be observed in the *modulations* from and between States and Drives” (Koningsveld, 2011, p. 29). As modulation occurs, it is observed that there is a sharing of one motion factor or Effort quality and this change is not considered a static event (Laban, 1988; Laban & Lawrence, 1974; Moore, 2009). For example, a shared quality of Space could create a modulation between Awake State (Time and Space) and Spell Drive (Weight, Flow and Space). The

transformation from a State to a Drive, and vice versa, varies on “how” or “when” the transformation is made. The understanding of modulation was important to my thesis because it helped me understand transformation of Drive and State Effort configurations when observing movement.

Between States and Drives there are fifty-six possible configurations, but some theorists feel that the possibilities are endless because “Effort elements are modified by degree of intensity,” and “configurations emerge and subside in complicated rhythms of distinct and overlapping phrases” which produce an “infinite range of dynamic expression in movement” (Groff, 1990, p. 91). It is uncommon for a mover to demonstrate only one Effort quality, but it is possible to see them display up to four. This is called a full Effort configuration (Groff, 1990). Moore (2005) states:

Laban’s basic conceptualization of the dynamics of human motion is very parsimonious. There are only four motion factors and eight effort qualities. But these factors and qualities can be thought of as the dynamic building blocks from which more complex expressive movement sequences may be composed (p. 59-60).

Moore (2009) considers that Effort becomes a choice in most functional and expressive movement. Showing preference toward a particular Effort configuration implies a personal bias, and there seems to be an inclination toward the indulging or fighting Effort qualities (Moore, 2009). Laban (1988) believes that these tendencies become habitual patterns that are influenced by our temperament, personality, and character. Does this also mean that we show a particular preference in the way we move in our dreams? Are our dreams considered habitual? I believe that North (1975) answers my questions by pointing out that these tendencies are due to lifestyle, upbringing and other environmental factors. While this thesis was not developed to focus on our

tendencies, it is valid to recognize them because of our body knowledge and body prejudices—a concept further explored in section 3 of this chapter.

Humans are capable of feeling all Effort patterns. However, they may not always know how to access certain Effort patterns and, if they desire to do so, can seek the assistance of a trained LMA analysis. Konigsveld (2011) points out that “the ability to be conscious of Effort choices and to participate in movement observation is natural within humanity,” and if we desire to assist those in the understanding of their Effort patterns, we must learn how to properly “analyze another mover systematically” using a movement observation and analysis system (p. 40). I will now investigate how learning the LMA system prepares one to analyze inner intent—specifically using the category of Effort and the IMS observation and analysis method.

Section 3: Movement Observation and Analysis

The LMA system was created to look at four aspects in human movement: Body, Shape, Space and Effort. Integrated Movement Studies (IMS) students are taught the importance of observing movement using the whole of the system. However, it is also taught that focusing on one category at a time provides information about other parts of the system that will ultimately help us become experts in the field of LMA. This particular thesis focuses on Effort, and, therefore, this section will reference movement observation and analysis through the perspective of Effort.

Before the IMS program teaches movement observation and analysis techniques, it requires students to have personal Effort study and experience singular Effort qualities along with States and Drives. Exploration in Effort reveals preferences, strengths, and

weaknesses. It also invites emotional responses and supports personal and professional growth. The IMS program posits that understanding meaning through observation “leads to enhanced awareness of our own physical behavior in a manner which precludes self-consciousness” (Lamb, 1965, p. 24). Laban defines this as body knowledge “based upon generalizations drawn from our own embodied experiences” (Moore & Yamamoto, 1988, p. 88). Students are also required to be aware of kinesthetic responses and how they “feel” when observing movement. When observing particular movement events, it can have a negative or positive impact. This is defined as body prejudice and “originates from our capacity to abstract and generalize on the basis of our own movement experiences” (Moore & Yamamoto, 1988, p. 89). In order to best identify with movement patterns of others, a skilled LMA analyzer must understand their personal body knowledge/prejudice so that they do not project their own feelings on a mover and miss the key point of their inner intent (North, 1975). Konigsveld (2011) adds that “as an individual gains more experiences in movement, their body knowledge and body prejudice shifts, as the meanings of movement change and expand over time” (p. 10). While my personal body knowledge and body prejudices have shifted over time, it was good to be reminded about my own body knowledge/prejudices before using observation and analysis in my thesis project. Konigsveld’s (2011) words reminded me to be careful about passing any form of judgment on to my dancers—especially because I was using their dreams as the subject of my creation.

An observer of Effort is encouraged to look at each motion factor and to “take each detail of ‘Effort’ and look at it in isolation and in combination with other details,” (North, 1975, p. 18) discerning for themselves what factors or qualities are important,

what is missing and notice the changes made from moment to moment. Koningsveld (2011) points out that “looking at each motion factor and quality individually is important to understanding the meaning behind the movement” (p. 31). However, it is also imperative to take into consideration rhythms of Effort phrasing, transitions, and variations which have the capacity to help the observer understand the changing environment and the choices being made in Effort execution (Lawrence & Laban, 1974; North, 1975). A trained observer will mirror, copy, and repeat the patterns while taking time to feel out the movement and mentally note what the movement “feels” like in about twenty to thirty minutes (North, 1975). It is important to remember that “a given movement often has many meanings, depending on the context in which the behavior occurs and on the background of the person observing the action” (Moore & Yamamoto, 1988, p. 90). This important concept provides all expert observers with the idea that having multiple viewpoints leads to a more accurate conclusion about the meaning behind the movement. This knowledge inclined me to orient my dancers in the tenets of Laban’s Effort system so that they could participate in the observation process during the movement exploration phase of this thesis.

The steps that IMS teaches in the Effort analyzing process are as follows: First, students watch the mover and enjoy what they have to offer; Second, students write what they see using expressive language and personal feelings about the movement; Third, students are asked to stand and copy the movement—to “put it on” or “wear the movement”; Fourth, students observe in themselves the Effort factors and qualities that stand out most and begin to record these qualities using Effort symbols; Fifth, students either ask to watch the movement one more time or replay the movement they are

watching on video while scribing what they see using Effort symbols. Students then compare notes between what was felt and what was seen. In this step, the students may begin to notice Effort phrasing and write down what moments are most poignant. From their observation, students will notate what they believe the inner intent is saying. Those who have had years and years of training may not need to follow this entire process and may skip steps and/or create their own process. However, if there is ever any doubt about what is being analyzed, students may want to ask another expert to weigh in on the matter.

Chapter Summary

Laban is considered one of the most groundbreaking researchers in movement theory and movement analysis (Groff, 1990; Koningsveld, 2011). He dedicated his life to understanding human movement and contributed countless lectures, publications, and dance works about his philosophies for all who desired to understand his theories (Preston-Dunlop, 2008). Laban created the LMA notation system to better understand all types of functional and expressive movers. Bergin (2000) said that the development of the LMA system is “one of the most comprehensive methods used to understand the quality of movement,” which significantly affects the way we perceive and understand movement and, in particular, the way we perceive a mover’s intentions (p. 13). Effort is the least quantifiable since it addresses the qualitative aspect of expression and reveals emotional content which, ultimately, displays inner affect (Groff, 1990). When looking at the four physical properties, also known as motion factors (Flow, Weight, Time, and Space), a deeper understanding of the inner expressive attitude of any human mover can

emerge. This concept is the foundation of my thesis: to look at the expressive attitude stemming from my dancer's recollection of their dreams. In this thesis, I research how Effort can assist me and my dancers in the development of a more nuanced movement expression of dreams. Effort was used throughout the entire creation process of this thesis work, and the remaining chapters go into depth about the process I used to create the work.

CHAPTER 3

PREPARATION FOR THE CREATIVE WORK

Section 1: Artistic Inquiry as Qualitative Research

My thesis research attempts to make sense of personal dreams by using words, observation and analysis, movement and dance, and reflection—all a qualitative process. Koningsveld (2011) also adds that using sources such as videography, dance performance, and journaling are indicative ways of implementing qualitative research.

Furthermore, using art as a form of research brings up questions about the definition of art. John Dewey (1958) considers art to be a form of human experience, and there are many ways of understanding and researching the human experience. One way that has greatly impacted the way we understand human actions is the Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) system. Laban's LMA contributions are in line with Thomas Barone's (2011) fundamental belief that humans desire to "invent a variety of forms of representation to describe and understand the world in as many ways as it can be represented" (pg. 164). Laban's goal was to find a language that could help him define human movement expression (Groff, 1990). Therefore, he created LMA to describe and formulate the qualitative and quantitative features of human movement (Adrian, 2008; Moore, 2009). Laban's contributions have significantly affected the way we perceive and understand movement and, in particular, the way we perceive a mover's intentions.

Barone (2011) suggests that the primary goal of arts based research is to “expand the variety of resources that researchers can use to understand the social world” and that the aim of arts based research is “to supplement, to enlarge, to expand, and to diversify the tools researchers can use and through such diversification to both see what might not otherwise have been seen and to be able to say what otherwise might not have been able to be said” (p. 170). This thesis research project explores Laban’s principles that Effort “reveals the emotional content, (and) the qualitative display of inner affect” (Groff, 1990, p. 87), and attempts to apply his Effort theories in the choreographic process.

Section 2: Timeline of Events

The idea to create dance about dreams came to me at the end of my participation in the 2013 summer IMS eight week session. I woke from yet another vivid dream feeling inspired to create an entire work about dreams. I used the category of Effort to assist me in several aspects of the preparation process and to ultimately develop a more nuanced movement expression of dreams for the final choreography. I completed my plans in this order: (I) Use Effort to assist my dancers in dream recall during a one-on-one interview, (II) Observe and analyze their Effort life via video, (III) Select dream Effort sequences that interest me, (IV) Teach dancers about Effort by moving through the LMA system, and (V) Use Effort in movement exploration to prepare us for improvisation when creating choreography in the studio.

Dream Interviews

Before entering the studio, the dancers were instructed to write a couple of reoccurring or vivid dreams in preparation for a detailed one-on-one interview with me. I

interviewed five of the six dancers in front of a camera. My main goal was to study the Effort life during the interview. I videotaped the interviews for the purpose of later observation and analysis. I asked the dancers to (a) Describe the dream, (b) Select two to three words from a list of Effort qualities that best fit the dream, and (c) Move the dream. I will explain each task in detail in the following paragraphs.

Describe the dream

I instructed each dancer to sit in a chair and describe the dream as if they were telling a friend. As the dancers described their dreams, I immediately discovered that they all fluxed back and forth between Stable and Remote State. Stable State is made up of Weight and Space factors while Remote State is made up of Flow and Space factors. The Time factor was not at the forefront of the dreams and did not seem as important. As they talked, they mainly used gestures to tell their story. When the dancers got excited, their vocal inflections changed and their facial expressions seemed to match their tone. The most interesting thing I noticed was that their whole body rarely demonstrated or matched their excitement, and I attribute this to being seated in a chair.

Select Effort qualities that best fit the dream

After I got a small glimpse into their dream, each dancer received a list of the Effort qualities (Appendix A). Under each Effort quality were expressive words or phrases that offered another interpretation and refinement of that term. The dancers were instructed to pick two to three words to further define what their dream felt or looked like. Suddenly, the dream they had initially described changed dramatically. The overall

concepts did not change, but the dream became more detailed and, for some, became more emotionally charged.

Some dancers reported that the Effort words brought up forgotten feelings. One dancer found it difficult to continue the interview because of the feelings that were surfacing. I was pleasantly surprised at how incorporating the Effort qualities allowed the dancers' dreams to move more fully into their present and conscious self.

Move the dream

The third, and final, step in the interview process was having each dancer stand and move the dream. I asked them to move about the room in a small to medium kinesphere and use any movement that might include gestures. I did my best to communicate the importance of not worrying what they looked like. I wanted their movement to come from the heart—to be raw, to be real and spontaneous. The dancers did not know before coming to the interview that they would be moving. I did this on purpose so that none of their motions could be preplanned.

The dancers expressed to me that moving the dream clarified and amplified what it felt or looked like. Looking back, I believe that this exercise made manifest what they initially tried to express with words. As the dancers moved, many of them saw the relationship between their movement and the Effort words they had chosen. Sometimes they would correct themselves, realizing that the words they originally selected were not as exact as the movement they were demonstrating. Watching this unfold was exciting because the dancers seemed more invested in what we were doing and they were amazed that the LMA Effort language could bring about emotions and help with dream recall.

Before parting with my dancers, I revealed what I had observed throughout the interview using Effort language and mentioning what State or Drive I believed they were demonstrating. Even though they did not understand what a State or Drive was yet, I wanted to give them a small taste of the kind of information we were about to learn as a group.

Observation and Analysis using Videography

My decision to use video in the interview process was based on my training in the IMS program. The faculty used video to teach students how to use the LMA system for observation and analysis. This approach allowed me to rewind and watch the movement as many times as needed and helped me refine my observation. The farther I got into the program, the less I needed to rewind the video and the more I could do live observations and analysis with other students. Therefore, it was natural for me to desire a recording of my dancer's interviews.

A camera gave me the opportunity to enjoy the process and be present during the interview. I did not have to worry as much about obtaining an accurate Effort analysis. At times, it was difficult for my dancers to share their personal dreams. The camera allowed me to be engaged in conversation so that they would feel more comfortable when sharing such sensitive topics. Most importantly, it allowed me to catch what Brown (2005) considers as “intimate moments” that might be missed if I was only using live interview as part of the process. The camera then allowed for closer investigation of the Efforts the dancers conveyed.

In step one, the majority of the dancers shared details about where they went, who

they approached, and what they saw. Many of the dancers had a hard time using descriptive language to explain what they felt in their dream, but as soon as I gave them the sheet of paper with Effort words, their language changed dramatically. They were able to describe the things they felt rather than simply what had happened. The Effort words helped my dancers find language to describe things that might have been hard to categorize linguistically. The Effort language became a tool for them to find deeper meaning. I did not know it at the time, but after watching the video I noticed how I took advantage of that particular moment and pushed them to continue describing what was felt in the dream rather than what they saw. The influence of these words sparked memory and help my dancers translate nonverbal experiences into verbal ones. I watched myself asking many questions that helped the dancers pinpoint what it was about the dream that caught their attention. The progression and steps taken to express the dream provided us with a glimpse into the dancers' dreams that initially seemed distant, hard to remember, or hard to interpret. These Effort terms brought out emotions that we did not realize had existed, making this process both meaningful and very exciting.

Watching my dancers complete all three tasks in the interview process was fascinating. It was surprisingly enjoyable for me to watch the learning process my dancers went through when introducing the Effort terminology. However, I was most interested in observing Effort in task three: move the dream. I observed the video footage using the same IMS process I had previously learned—beginning with enjoying what the mover had to offer. I then replayed the video from the beginning of task three and wrote words, phrases, and expressive language to describe what I saw in my dancers movement. For example, I wrote in my journal after observing one of my dancers

movement:

Her world might collapse around her, as she moves ever so slowly to avoid making noise that might draw some sort of unwanted entity. She might look in control on the outside, but her undefined glances around the room give me this feeling that she is scared and unsure of what move to make next. It is almost a waiting game, should she be the first to move? Is there anyway out of this dark room? How much longer will this feeling last, that feeling when someone is watching my every move?

This particular journal writing was in reference to a dream my dancer had about a bear stalking her outside her family's house. I decided that the majority of her movement was Bound Flow, Indirect Space and Sustained Timing—which happened in Vision Drive. I then embodied the movement myself by mirroring and doing my best to copy the dancer's Effort. This allowed me to dig deeper into the feeling, and I wrote down what Effort stood out most in my own body. I replayed task three again and scribed the dancer's Effort using symbols and adding the States and Drives for their movements. I repeated this step for each interview.

Dream Selection for Choreography

I wanted to create movement based off the dancers' Effort that occurred in the Action, Passion, Spell and Vision Drives since these movements are considered to be the main actions in movement. After analyzing their dreams, I looked at my notes and the Drive Effort configurations I had written in symbol form. I assigned a dream to a Drive based on the Effort qualities that were demonstrated and surfaced most in my dancers interview. I decided that I would choreograph four short sections, each representing a Drive. Therefore, I also began to look at what dreams might complement and contrast each other—a strategy often used while making choreography that is taught in basic

composition classes (Blom, 1982).

Teaching LMA Effort Category

For the first two rehearsals, I taught my dancers about Effort. The dancers were instructed to improvise and invest their whole body as I described the Effort qualities. Once they seemed to understand each quality, we began to Effort load, or what is known as adding one Effort quality at a time to another, beginning to build States and Drives. Koningsveld (2011) believes that promoting Effort awareness “creates recognition of inner attitude, which may be a momentary mood or long-standing personality characteristic of the mover” (p. 41). As I introduced each Drive, I asked the dancers to move to the poetic explanation I read from handouts received in my IMS training (Appendix B). Afterwards, we talked about what feelings surfaced for each Drive. I also introduced States, and the dancers and I did a quick movement experience but did not go into great detail about the feelings experienced. Koningsveld (2011) states that “by educating or training individuals and increasing awareness of movement possibilities, humans develop the ability to utilize boundless expressive qualities,” (p. 18) and the training the dancers received was to benefit all of us because it gave them a better understanding of the language that I would use throughout the choreographic process.

Movement Exploration

My focus was to let the dancers frolic about the Effort category and use movement exploration to experience all the States and Drives. After some time, I began to introduce the Effort configurations that I had selected and instructed my dancers to

move the configurations as a group. They would move until I told them to stop, and I would tell them what I saw using metaphor, simile, and images that came to mind. For example, I asked my dancers to move with Bound Flow, Indirect Space and Quick Timing—which occurs in Vision Drive. I wrote in my notebook “looking scared and lost” and told them that I could see something controlling them, that a bunch of lost girls were quickly looking in all directions for a way to escape a dark place. Through movement exploration, observation, and discussion, we developed similar understandings of these Effort configurations and concluded that this collaborative exercise allowed us to clarify our collective understanding of these arranged Efforts. The following chapter specifically addresses the details of my choreographic process using improvisation for the development of a performance piece.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT OF CHOREOGRAPHY FROM STUDIO TO STAGE

We improvised based on the Effort configurations and images developed during our movement explorations. We used many forms of improvisation to build material. By the end of the fourth rehearsal, I began asking my dancers to repeat movement from these improvisational sessions that seemed rich with potential and that appeared to further investigate the Efforts with which we originally played. At times, I asked them to work independently, instructing the dancers to develop a phrase based on Effort moments that felt pure and significant to them. Each dancer was asked to perform and teach their phrase to the cast. I took it upon myself to direct my dancers by manipulating their phrases using choreographic methods I had learned from my choreography workshop classes. We ended up with small, cohesive three to five minute dances. We called these short dances “moments” (a name that matched the feeling that was created by the dancers), and I will refer to them as such throughout this chapter. For example, we built upon a phrase that ultimately turned into a three to four minute improvisational score and named it “controlling.” In this score, a dancer is trying to escape from sitting in a chair while the other dancers pull her back. I recorded this “moment,” and many others, so that I could review the footage later.

I improvised based off the State and/or Drive we were working with at the time. I asked my dancers to observe me and “catch” whatever movement they could—a choreographic technique I learned from Satu Hummasti, a professor in the Modern Dance Department. This required my dancers to build a small phrase based off what they saw. We repeated “caught” steps mentioned above, the dancers taught their phrases, we manipulated them, and then recorded the movement on video. I chose to try this “catching” method for my dancers who struggled with particular Effort qualities. Before improvising, I told the dancers to watch for certain Effort qualities in hopes that it might help them see what it looked like. Since they were watching to “catch” movement, letting them know ahead of time what Effort quality they were observing seemed to help them better understand that quality. By offering my dancers another avenue of understanding the qualities they were able to come to a better understanding of what certain Efforts felt and looked like. Over time, we built a small library of “moments” based off States and Drives that had originally been centered on the dreams I had selected.

I was delighted to use improvisation as an inroad to create the majority of the choreography because it brought a sense of authenticity and true Effort intent. However, the first section was based on one of my ballroom tango-like dreams, and I felt the need to paint a picture for them through a movement experience. I decided to teach my dancers aspects of the tango and movement to help them embody the Effort life.

I taught the dancers that ballroom tango is danced to a strong staccato 4/4 beat, and the movement for women tends to be a bit suggestive because the woman is seducing her man to dance so close to her. When the man and woman take hold, they mimic the tango music with head snaps and sharp staccato-like movement in different portions of

the body. Sometimes only a flick of the hand or foot is needed to show understanding of the music. Every once in a while, a tango pair will throw in a legato movement to help build to staccato movements that typically lead to abrupt pauses. My dancers and I also talked about various things that might represent tango: the close embrace, the color red, flower in the mouth or hair, fast staccato movement and big skirts to flick around. I demonstrated small gestures to show them the Effort qualities in the tango. I pulled out the list of Effort words they had previously been introduced to and we decided upon which words best represent tango movement. I taught my dancers a couple of the Americanized tango steps that open and close into an international tango dance frame—one that interlocks the leading arm to help the couple stay together when demonstrating fast movement. I did this to help my dancers feel comfortable with such an unfamiliar dance style.

Once they felt comfortable with the steps and dance frame, we began to improvise. I played tango music to help them feel the Effort qualities in the movement. I instructed the dancers to use basic steps and build upon them with the images we discussed. After some time, the dancers started to create their own steps by confidently manipulating the basic steps, embracing the tango music, and allowing their understanding of the tango to inspire their movement. To my amazement, my dancers were able to pick up the character of a tango dancer, something that is difficult for even a veteran ballroom dancer to understand. I believe this happened because we were able to determine what Effort qualities make up a tango character. The Effort language offered us quick access to the physicality. I also asked them to create gestures based on the sounds, images, and Effort of tango. We recorded these moments, along with their

gestures, for later review.

About a month into this process I presented preset movement material, and I did this because of my need to control everything. This collaborative and improvisational structure I had built for myself felt daunting. Like any choreographer, I became discouraged thinking that everything I attempted was going to fail. I prepared the choreography by playing with the Effort I had selected based on the dream.

The dancers and I grouped all the moments we had created into three separate sections and pieced them together with transitions to create small dances. After a couple of weeks, we collectively had up to thirty minutes of choreography. This process was tedious and required many rehearsals to build seven to nine minute dances. I found the process of building phrases and moments to be very nonlinear compared to the preparation process. The preparation process felt prescribed because it had steps and a set plan—a controlled feeling, described as bound flow in LMA terms. The process of choreographing from studio to stage was not prearranged—what might be defined as free flowing in LMA terms. I always entered the studio with a plan but so often found myself changing plans in the moment because of my need to revisit phrase material or have my dancers improvise a bit more before moving forward with the choreography. Thomas Barone (2001) states that art “is a process that does not move in a series of linear steps nor as the result of a recipe or formula” (p. 48-49). I felt scatterbrained in some rehearsals because of this nonlinear progression and depended on my notes to help me find a path to follow. Twyla Tharp (2003) explains that “the first steps of a creative art are like groping in the dark: random and chaotic, feverish and fearful, a lot of busy-ness with no apparent or definable end in sight” (p. 94). I found her thoughts about creating dance very similar

to the phenomena of dreams; they are sometimes random and chaotic and do not have a linear creation.

About a month into rehearsals the dancers and I had created three very distinct and separate dances based off the selected dreams and their Effort. To be more specific, each section was based off three Drives: Passion, Spell and Action. Each section told a story and had narrative supporting it even though the stories were still developing. All I knew was that I saw interactive relationships being built between the characters that demonstrated love, hate, confusion, etc. I was interested to hear friends and colleagues perspectives on the way the choreography was developing and invited some to come watch and offer feedback.

Unfortunately, the three dream sequences did not have any relationship or connectivity to each other. I realized that each section was very different and had the potential to stand alone. I desperately wanted all three of these dreams to be one dance. My thesis committee also thought the piece was disjointed and incoherent with nothing connecting it from section to section. The committee wanted a through-line—a connecting theme, something that sewed the sections together. They saw three separate sections instead of one dance. With only three weeks until the performance, my committee members suggested two thoughts: (1) Develop only the first section a bit further and save the others for a future choreographic endeavor, or (2) Overlap and intertwine the three dream sections to create one dance. I favored the second suggestion and proceeded to work collaboratively with the cast to prevent me from dismissing two dancers from a section of the choreography. I called an extra Saturday rehearsal to begin the process of editing and I asked them the following:

1. If you could pick one or two moments from each section that seem most important to the choreography, what would they be?
2. Which moment is the most important to your character?
3. Pick two “picture” moments that help display what the dream is all about.
4. For you, where does the movement hit the climax of the choreography?

I took diligent notes as the dancers and I listened to each other’s answers. I was not surprised to hear some identical answers, but I was astounded when I did not hear about moments that I thought were important. I kept the process of elimination simple and decided that if a moment was mentioned more than three times it would stay in the choreography. The dancers answers helped me figure out that a considerable amount of choreography was not needed and that narrative did not necessarily have to be linear since dreams tend not to be.

We stepped into the studio, started from the top, and basically began chopping away at the choreography. Many of these important moments were easily two to three minutes in length. All of the in-between movement that existed between the significant moments seemed to disappear, shorten dramatically, or turn into a fast transition for the next important moment. We also dramatically rearranged and overlapped these moments. We had two or three dreams happening at once on the stage. In just two hours, we had completely changed the dance. The phrases were the same, the Effort life did not change, the characters stayed the same, and yet it was a completely new dance with new relationships. Now it looked like a dream—a very chaotic dream.

My dancers were invested and we built great trust throughout this entire process. I always did my best to enter the studio prepared to make quick decisions and not linger

too long. I trusted the dancers, and I believe that this relationship is what saved my choreography in the end. If this bond of trust had not been built from the beginning, then this last challenge we encountered would have been much more difficult. All of the changes were a huge challenge but were needed to make a more cohesive piece.

CHAPTER 5

CHALLENGES

Section 1: Learning how to “Let Go!”

As inspired by one of my committee members, I started to let go of the Effort terminology as the only language while communicating with my dancers. Letting go of the Effort terminology gave me a new perspective and forced me to find new ways of explaining to my dancers what I wanted. I began using more imagery and metaphor. I was also trying to find the logic of the dance as it existed now. Using different language felt like a breath of fresh air. Effort language had become a crutch and was no longer supporting my process. In this moment, I embraced Effort as the portal into the creative process but not necessarily used as a means to finish crafting the piece and coaching the dancers.

Another challenge to overcome was my innate desire to have everything planned. After having read *The Creative Habit*, I learned from Twyla Tharp (2003) that “there’s a fine line between good planning and over planning. You never want the planning to inhibit the natural evolution of your work” (p. 118). I was confident that using improvisation would force me to let go of that detailed planning. I knew I would have to find what worked in the moment and not depend on figuring it out before stepping into the studio. I expected that it would give me the opportunity to experiment without

expectations for myself and allow for opportunities to discover, mess up, and to have that “accidental spark” that Twyla Tharp (2003) talks about when not over planning.

However, I found myself getting wrapped up in my plans and many times let my schedule get in the way of the development of the choreography. Instead of taking the time to really explore a concept that my dancers had improvised, I found myself moving on to make sure I stayed on track. Moving as fast as I did gave me abundant amounts of movement, but I failed to explore much of the movement we had created and could not see my work’s full potential. I realized this problem about halfway through the choreographic process when I kept receiving comments such as “It’s a good start,” or “I can’t wait to see how this choreography develops.” I remember thinking that it was already developed and complete. I finally found a way to explore the choreography more deeply through a solo. I let the choreography tell me what it wanted to be, and I did not force it to be something else. Nor did I force it to be a finished product because I was no longer letting time determine if the piece was done. I learned that letting go of plans, my schedule, and diving into the unknown was the best direction choreographically. This particular part of the choreography became my favorite. I wish I had slowed down much earlier in the process because I believe the rest of my choreography desperately needed more work in this area.

Another crutch that I found myself trying to let go of was my desire to use the structure I had experienced as a ballroom dancer. I had to remind myself to let the dancers guide me—to let them make the decisions about the movement since we were using improvisation as our main creating tool. Using structured improvisation was hard and new for me. However, I still had some control over what Effort language was central

to our daily improvisations, and this allowed me to feel like I had constructed a part of the choreography. I am proud to say that about eighty-five percent of the choreography was purely created by the dancers based on their improvisations about the Effort life felt in their dreams. Even though we used structured improvisation, I was the director—the one in charge of crafting the movement through careful observation and ultimately making the decisions.

Section 2: Body Prejudice/Body Knowledge

I first learned about this unique phrase while studying the BF and LMA systems in the IMS program. Moore and Yamamoto (2012) also write in length about Body Prejudice/Body Knowledge in their book *Beyond Words: Movement Observation and Analysis*. The IMS program prepared me to observe any mover without overtly projecting my own body prejudices. IMS makes it very clear that we all have our own body knowledge but need to be careful about not projecting our body prejudices on the observed mover. This in itself was one of the most challenging aspects of my thesis project. In order for me to observe and identify with my dancers' movement, I felt like it was very important for me to let go of some of my prejudices. I needed to remember that as we explored movement anything was allowed and to not correct my dancers.

My hardest body prejudice to overcome was regarding ballroom. This particular form is so ingrained in my body—not just the movement itself but also my strong beliefs about what it should look like and how it should be performed. I followed the NDCA codified way—the only way that I had ever followed. I also knew that I needed to play with the movement in a way that I had never explored before to help myself let go of my

prejudices. For example, I was taught, and have always firmly believed, that ballroom should be danced in pairs, specifically demonstrated with a man and a woman. In this thesis piece, I let two women dance together in the international tango frame. At one point, it turned into a trio of women. For me, this was an exceptionally challenging choice.

I also did my best not to judge my dancers dreams. My dancers had their own body knowledge around their dreams that I never could fully understand with my own body, even when using a system that helped me understand inner intent. This made a very poignant point for me to respond to their dreams as sacred, especially because their dreams were very personal. The challenge for me was to not project my understanding of their dreams in the choreography, but to assign them to a specific Drive and let my dancers create movement based on the interpretation of the Effort qualities.

Section 3: Working with my Dancers

Using Effort, a system that none of my dancers knew about, was a challenging part of the project. I was a bit naive to think that we would all understand each other and that there would be no problems in the creative process if I taught them about Effort. I was not necessarily wrong, but I came across some challenging situations that were unexpected.

I agree with Koningsveld (2011) that “by educating or training individuals and increasing awareness of movement possibilities, humans develop the ability to utilize boundless expressive qualities” (p. 18). However, I believe that it takes a lot of time and practice to truly understand the vast array of Effort expressions of which we are capable.

If I could go back and repeat this project, I would either work with LMA trained dancers or give an ample amount of time to the untrained dancers to embody the information. Again, I believe it was a good idea to introduce my dancers to Effort, but they needed more time to let the information settle in their bodies.

As we played with the dream Effort constellations, I could see true emotions and interpretations of the States and Drives. For some of my dancers, it did not look forced or uncomfortable to fully embody whatever character was developed. However, some of my dancers had a harder time embracing particular configurations based off the improvisations. I constantly found myself trying to coach the dancers out of their personal Effort habits, making rehearsals feel monotonous and challenging. This brought to light a very challenging question for me: should I cater to each individual dancer's Effort strengths or make it a teaching moment and see if I can get the correct Effort out of them? One of my goals was to see if I could correctly coach the Effort qualities we had chosen.

For some of my dancers, I took the harder path and decided to see if I could coach the correct Effort configurations. In doing so I only used the Effort terminology and thought that was the best way to express to my dancers what the movement needed to be. After weeks of what felt like pulling teeth, I was advised by one of my committee members to try a different, more familiar, strategy. I tried many different techniques, but found that what worked for some did not work for others. Finally, I decided to demonstrate. This was challenging in itself since I was almost six months pregnant, dealing with hip and lower body issues, and the fact that our rehearsals were always late at night when I was already so exhausted. I did my best, and it worked! I was so fixated

on using only Effort terminology that I forgot there were other ways to communicate with my dancers. I was quickly reminded that everyone learns differently, and that it was my job as the choreographer to cater to my dancers needs—my dancers' Effort needs.

Looking back, this could have been limiting to the choreographic process, but I was a curious choreographer and wanted to experiment with Effort coaching.

Section 4: Choreography Challenges

I struggled with ending the piece. I had an idea of how I wanted to end it weeks before getting to this choreographic point but was having a hard time figuring out how to connect the whole piece to my desired ending. It was not until I let go and listened to the choreography that the ending came. It, of course, was not what I wanted, but I learned that sometimes it is more about what your art needs than what you want. As much as I wanted to predetermine the ending, it was not the correct way to go about it. I was not as happy with the ending—only satisfied. However, I learned that sometimes you have to be okay with satisfied in order to move on.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I was asked to make very challenging editing decisions on the choreography only a couple of weeks before the performance. I really did not want to let go of any of the choreography. I was so attached to it all and felt trapped trying to make any decisions—not knowing where to begin. I had so many people around me offer suggestions, and while I tried my best to incorporate all of them, I turned to my dancers for final advice. They helped me sift through all of the suggestions and genuinely wanted to help me figure out what the dance needed. My dancers taught me that a collaborative process truly means collaboration to the very end.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Section 1: Results

During the preperformance spacing rehearsal, technical rehearsal, and dress rehearsal, I observed the performance with an Effort lens. I noticed my dancers making last minute Effort changes. The changes they made on the stage were not drastic, but it was enough for me to notice the dancers adding or taking away one or two Effort factors that resulted in a change of the Drives I had originally picked for the movement. I decided not to address this discovery when giving corrections after each stage rehearsal because I did not want to stress them out with minute Effort details that really did not matter. I decided in that moment that what mattered most was their dedicated performance towards the relationships that they created.

However, I did not completely ignore this interesting discovery and wondered why my dancers changed their Effort. Was it because of my lack of Effort coaching? Did my decision to let go of the Effort language for a long period of time (to use images, metaphor, and simile) to further describe what the choreography needed affect their ability to be consistent with the chosen Effort? Was it the last minute choreography changes that affected their ability to stay consistent? I would like to associate these Effort changes to the fact that the dancers' emotional performance changed with each stage

rehearsal. I witnessed clearer intention in their movement as they continued to find meaning for themselves. Since the Effort system allowed my dancers to find inner intent and further pursue their characters expressive meaning, I believe this could be one reason why my dancers changed many of the Drive configurations from the original choreography. Another reason could be that our movement habits are deeply ingrained in our body knowledge/prejudices and surfaces often in our dancing, even when we subconsciously try to avoid our habitual movement Effort patterns.

To showcase my creative work, *Exposure to the Surreal* (Derington, 2013) was performed three evenings at the Hayes Christensen Theater at the University of Utah on December 5th, 6th and 7th, 2013. As I reflected back on the choreographic process and final performance, I came to several realizations. I determined that I would deem my project successful based off the premise of my main goal: to create and fully embrace a new choreographic structure using the Effort system in a collaborative environment. I am happy to report that I accomplished this goal by not giving up on the process and/or giving in to my old ways of choreographing.

The work felt successful when I found that it had produced large quantities of material, something that I have always been nervous about as new modern dance choreographer. In this particular experience, the Effort system served more effectively as a tool for generating movement than it did for coaching. In the future I will continue to better myself as an Effort coach. I desire to continue my search for better communication tools when choreographing and/or teaching any style of dance. I took several risks that terrified me, such as incorporating nontraditional ballroom choreography and directing structured improvisation while using Effort language for the first time.

The Effort system also helped with another one of my goals: to see if I could assist my dancers in finding personal nuances in the movement. The Effort system allowed my dancers to find uniqueness and made them more human to me than just a body that can learn and present material for a choreographic project. My dancers enjoyed hearing about their habitual patterns or their choice of Effort that made the choreography special. Effort gave us the opportunity to find inner intent and, ultimately, led to a deeper investigation of the meaning behind the movement.

Observing my dancers Effort allowed me to witness an interesting emotional phenomenon. Some of my dancers were willing to let emotion surface and guide their movement during improvisation while others held back. This gave me the opportunity to coach them through their personal emotional discoveries and push them to figure out what their inner character was yearning to demonstrate. I was pleasantly surprised that my use of Effort could pull out such deep emotion and allow the dancers to feel more intimately linked to the work.

So often my dancers would ask me if they were dancing it the way I wanted. After drilling them in the Effort combinations and realizing I needed to let go of the terminology, I began responding by saying, “dance it the way you feel is best and enhance the Effort, the emotions you feel from the movement.” Towards the end of the process, it became my job to push their performing quality and get them to feel comfortable demonstrating it the way the choreography called for. I was more of a facilitator, director, and editor than a pure choreographer who made all the decisions.

I was never caught off guard by the unexpected hurdles and dips that inevitably came my way. I had this feeling that a challenge was always around the corner, and I

accepted them as graciously as possible. The trials I encountered only made the choreography better, and I am thankful for that. Of course, there were times that I wanted to give in and fall back on the structure I was accustomed to and create a piece by *me*. This was a challenging process, but I reminded myself over and over that if I did not allow myself to experience this new way of choreographing, I would not consider my efforts a success.

In the future, were I to pursue another choreographic endeavor, I might narrow my focus to one or two dancers' dreams and work on solos instead of a large work. This would give me another opportunity to coach Effort, and practice a skill that has proved to clarify inner intent. I will further investigate the use of Effort as a choreographic tool in future endeavors, no matter the subject. I also plan to continue using collaboration but not as much improvisation—a tool that was useful but extremely stressful for me. In place of improvisation, I would be interested in presenting material and then allowing dancers to manipulate it using the Effort system. Still, in the end, I am happy with and proud of the outcome of my thesis project. I feel that my research, methods, and time were well spent in an endeavor that has taught me so much more than I could have dreamed.

Section 2: Conclusion

In conclusion, the Effort language helped my dancers and I clearly describe our feelings in our dreams and move into a more fully present and conscious part of ourselves. The observation and analysis methods I used gave me the opportunity to practice Laban and his successors' Effort philosophies—specifically when observing movement that occurs in the subconscious mind, during movement exploration, and

improvisation. The Effort language offered my dancers the opportunity to make qualitative choices and supported their understanding of how to fluidly progress between various physical manifestations of emotion. The dancers' dreams and Effort language was truly a starting point for the creative work—what Twyla Tharp (2003) calls the “spine” (p. 142). Using Effort in the creative process diversified my choreographic tools. It allowed me to feel comfortable working with structured improvisation because it permitted me to direct the Effort we improvised. I also found that Effort allowed my dancers to pinpoint, clarify, and find meaning in their movement. Based off these findings, I recommend using the Effort system to enhance a mover's intentions and emotional quality for performance. I would also recommend learning this system for teachers who desire another language tool to choose from for classroom and choreographic purposes.

APPENDIX A

EFFORT WORD AND PHRASE BANK

Free Flow

- Easy Going
- Lack of Control
- Careless/Carefree
- Reckless abandon
- Continual fluidness
- Outpouring with generosity
- Cannot be stopped
- With Ease

Bound Flow

- Careful/Cautious
- Poised
- Rigid
- Tense/Guarding
- Withholding Energy
- Inner energy feels restricted
- Feel reserved/inhibited
- Energy flow kept within bodily boundaries
- Complete concentration to fulfill your tasks

Light Weight

- Delicate
- Fine touch
- Little resistance to your movement
- Gently create intricate, soft, and detailed trace forms throughout the kinesphere
- Defy gravity and indulge in expansiveness of your high quality and style
- Buoyant
- Airy
- Sensitive
- Numerous

Strong Weight

- Persevering
- Able to take a stand and hold it
- Excellent willpower
- Strong willed
- Energetic/forceful
- Assertive
- Determination
- Powerful/firm
- Getting behind your weight
- Confronting
- Earthy

Sustained timing

- Gradual
- Prolonged
- Lingered
- Calming
- Endless
- Leisurely
- Legato
- Unhurried
- Never-ending/lasting progression
- Calmly ponder your decisions

Sudden/Quick timing

- Urgent/fleeting
- Instantaneous reactions
- Spark-like
- Excited/Lively
- Sharp
- A surprise
- Staccato
- Decisions are hastily
- Immediate action
- Animated
- Efficient

Indirect Space

- Flexible
- Deviating
- Multifocused
- Overlapping foci
- Generous attitude
- Exploring for new possibilities
- Taking everything in
- Awareness of the whole/environment
- Highly observant

Direct Space

- Channeled
- Pin Pointing
- Honing in on
- To the point
- Following a consistent line
- Not easily distracted
- Accurate persistence
- Good concentration

APPENDIX B

POETIC DRIVE DEFINITIONS

Appendix A is relevant to Chapter 3: Preparation for the Creative Work. When I began teaching by dancers Laban's Effort Drives I decided to use written material I had obtained from author, professor, and one of the developers of the IMS program Peggy Hackney (1998). As I introduced each Drive, I asked the dancers to move to these beautiful poetic explanations.

Actionmaster (Action Drive)

Actionmaster always confidently knew just what needed to be done at any specific point in time and in any context; and could put him/herself to work doing it without undue emotional "baggage." The community could count on Actionmaster to be there in the middle of the action and making things happen. Around Actionmaster one did not have to be concerned about "feelings," because they were irrelevant to the task, or perhaps under the surface—certainly not the major aspect of Actionmaster's concern. Actionmaster has a strong (or delicate) attention to space and a moment to moment decisiveness that was gratifying to be around. It made the community feel safe, knowing that things were being taken care of (Hackney, 1998).

Passionmaster (Passion Drive)

"Yes, I love it! Fabulous!"
"No! Are you crazy?! I hate it!"
"Ah, the feel of velvet...so luscious..."
"Oooh, yum...delicious..."

There's never a doubt about what's going on inside Passionmaster. Absolutely not! Passionmaster doesn't give a thought, not even the slightest attention, to ideas, theories or facts of the environment. Around Passionmaster one is catapulted into the inner world of luscious sensations, thrills in the moment, agony, ecstasy, frustration, delight! Swept in the feelingful flow of the now moment, Passionmaster "gets into it" in gutsy or delicately sensitive ways, and others catch the energy! Being around Passionmaster reminds each person of what was once said, "If you don't get into your own feeling right now, the moment is gone and you've left yourself out of it" (Hackney, 1998).

Spellmaster (Spell Drive)

Spellmaster brought a sense of grounded presence to the community. Spellmaster's personal power or delicate touch could draw the community together to deal with the important vital concerns which enabled life in the village to continue. Spellmaster's wisdom did not respond to momentary fluctuations in time in the moment, but was rooted in the stable connection with the eternity of the Earth. Around Spellmaster each person in the community could personally feel the weight of his/her own contribution to creating purpose and meaning in the community. Every cell in every person became sensate and was drawn into a willingness to work with integrity and generosity—pouring personal weight behind common beliefs for the good of the whole. Around Spellmaster there seemed to be an awareness of the common dream, and a sense of the timeless eternal rituals that would maintain it (Hackney, 1998).

Visionmaster (Vision Drive)

Visionmaster was entirely selfless—focused totally on stories from the past and visions of the now and future time. Visionmaster had an amazing sense for the moment in which a particular concept would bring clarity to the present situation. In an instant Visionmaster could orient the community to new perceptions—streaming thoughts and intuitions which would reveal the true nature of the universal flow and benefit both the environment and humankind. Around Visionmaster one was able to indulge in a sense of the intense sustained concentration, partake of creative visualization, or have a sudden insight. When heightened awareness required the luxury of time for full understanding, Visionmaster was able to get out of the way, and the community could linger in the liquid space of a thought... or in an instant play quickly with changing awareness (Hackney, 1998).

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